

MEDIA RELEASE

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ADA NSW supports community fluoride strategies

ADA NSW supports the recently released Community Fluoride Strategy Guidelines issued by NSW Health.

Water fluoridation at Australian levels is a safe, effective and equitable way to prevent tooth decay in people of all ages. Latest figures show that in NSW, around 93 per cent of the population has access to fluoridated drinking water.

The introduction to this document rightly points out that some populations who are at the highest risk of suffering tooth decay don't currently have access to fluoridated water. These communities are mostly in rural and remote areas with populations that are not connected to town water supplies.

High risk groups identified by NSW Health include:

- Dependent older people
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Rural and remote communities
- People with a disability
- Some migrant groups, particularly refugees
- People on low incomes.

ADA NSW President Dr Neil Peppitt said any additional programs that support good oral health are welcome.

"We know that fluoride has protective benefits for people of all ages, and it's particularly important that those most at risk of suffering tooth decay have access to it," Dr Peppitt said. "NSW Health is to be commended for introducing alternative fluoride programs for the most vulnerable, including those communities where water fluoridation is not available."

"We are aware of some schools in remote areas where only one in 10 school students own a toothbrush. We are also aware of schools that have supervised tooth brushing programs integrated into a healthy breakfast club.

"ADA NSW supports programs that promote good oral hygiene and good oral health habits. Children benefit from supervised tooth brushing programs in childcare centres and schools. Evidence shows that the earlier children form good oral health habits – brushing twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, drinking fluoridated water and seeing a dentist regularly – the lower the rates of tooth decay."

About ADA NSW: ADA NSW is the peak professional association for dentists and dental students in NSW and the ACT with 4600 members. ADA NSW has been supporting dentists and promoting good oral health in the community since 1929.

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